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NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

THE DERIVATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GREEK WORD FOR "COCK"

The explanation of the word *ἀλέκτωρ* as given in most Greek dictionaries and commentaries overlooks the true etymology and perpetuates ancient errors in interpreting its origin. The dictionary of Liddell and Scott gives the two meanings of "cock" and "husband" for *ἀλέκτωρ*, adducing for the second meaning the scholion of Tzetzes on Lycophron, *Alexandra* 1094, and adding "perhaps also Soph. *Frag.* 730."

In the lines of Lycophron¹ the words *ἐχίνος*, *ἀλέκτωρ*, and *ὄρνιθας* are all metaphors, and the comment of Tzetzes on *ἀλέκτωρ* is pointless. In the fragment of Sophocles² the literal meaning of *ἀλέκτωρ* is the likely one, the sense being that the god Apollo was roused to daily toil by the crying of the cock.

Eustathius does not hesitate to give the two opposing meanings for *ἀλέκτωρ*—*ὁμολέκτρος* and *ἡ μὴ πειραθεῖσα λέκτρον*. The second of these has been taken by him from the passage in Athenaeus 3. 53, modeled on Lucian's *Lexiphanes*, the point of which lies in the "nice derangement of epitaphs" of the *ὀνοματοθήρας* Pontianus of Philadelphia.

The derivations in these cases proceed from the unscientific idea that *ἀλέκτωρ* comes from *ἀ* in negative or copulative sense, and *λέκτρον*. In 1883 Meyer, in his *Griechische Etymologie*, I, 296, gave the true derivation of the word, which is an absolutely regular formation from *ἀλέξω*, *ἀλέκω*. Meyer, however, is wrong in his interpretation of the word as "warlike." His explanation is "*ἀλέκτωρ* bedeutet also Abwehrer, wie der kampfflustige Hahn gewiss leicht genannt werden konnte." The same derivation from *ἀλέξω* is given also by Kretschmer in *Kuhn's Zeitschrift* (1894, pp. 559 f.). His explanation of the psychology of the word is that it is an application of the epic name Alektor to the bird (which³ does not appear in Greece until the sixth century), because the meaning corresponded to its fighting character. He compares the use of Renard for the fox.

The name Alektor belongs in a group which consisted originally of epithets of apotropaic deities, such as Alexanor and Alexandros from *ἀλέξω*,

¹ τοιαῦδε ἐχίνος μηχαναῖς οἰκοφθορῶν
παραιολίζει τὰς ἀλεκτόρων πικρὰς
στεγανόμους ὄρνιθας.

² οὐμός ἀλέκτωρ αὐτὸν ἦγε πρὸς μύλην.

³ Hehn, *Kulturpflanzen und Haustiere*, p. 317.

Amunos, Amuntas, etc., from ἀμύνω, and Aleuas and Alea from ἀλεύω. These three verbs are often found in prophylactic prayers.¹ The health deities particularly, such as Alexanor, Alkon, and Amynos, have names from these verbs, and the use of the cock in the sacrifice to Asklepios is in keeping with his name "Averter." The word is an active formation of the North Greek type (cf. Hoffman, *Die Makedonen*, 11 and 171) and its first meaning is "Averter of Evil" from others, or "Defender" of others, and not "pugnacious" or "warlike," as both Meyer and, following him, Kretschmer interpret it.

The superstition that the cock drives away evil spirits is very ancient and prevails among peoples of naïve beliefs today, such as the peasants of County Clare in Ireland, where a black cock is sacrificed on the druid altars to the devil, in the Hebrides, in Naples, in modern Greece. (On the potency of white, red, and black cocks to drive away demons see J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion*, p. 195.) The white cock was used in antiquity to counteract winds and disease (Paus. ii. 34. 2; Plut. *Pyrrhus*, c. 3).

The cock was, as Hehn (*loc. cit.*) and Gruppe (*Handbuch*, Bd. 5. 2. 795) emphasize, a bird of the sun, and the belief about his power in that connection is stated in *Hamlet*, I, i, 150 (see Furness, *ad. loc.*).

I have heard
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day, and at his warning
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine.

And to the same purport Basilius, bishop of Caesarea,
*αὐτοῦ φωνήσαντος, πᾶς δαίμων φεύγει.*²

Also Prudentius *Ad Gallicinium*:

Ferunt vagantes daemones
Laetos tenebris noctium
Gallo canente exterritos
Sparsim timere et cedere.

The Περσικὸς ὄρνις in this way became the ἀλέκτωρ, "Averter of Evil."

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A SEMANTIC STUDY OF *licio*

The verb *licio* 'lead' or 'drive' is not cited in the lexicons or in Walde, yet manifest relationships and a large number of derivatives attest its existence. Its vogue was confined to the home life and the farm and scarcely

¹ Cf. *Od.* 3. 346; *Il.* 1. 456; *Aesch. P. V.* 567; *Suppl.* 528; *Septem* 141.

² In Boissonade, *Anecd. Graec.* 3. 445.